

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectively requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication in the Office Action that claims 2 and 3 are allowable. The subject matter of allowable claim 2 has been incorporated into base claim 1, and claim 2 has been cancelled. Dependent claim 3 has been amended to depend directly from claim 1. Therefore, allowance of claim 1, dependent claim 3, and new dependent claim 4 is warranted.

The title has been amended in the manner suggested in the Office Action for overcoming the applied objection.

The specification has been amended to recite the subject matter of the revised claims in the Disclosure of the Invention section. No new matter is believed to be introduced by the amendment of the specification.

Claims 5-8 have been newly added. The subject matter of claims 5-8 is supported by for example Figs. 1 and 2, the original claims, and the specification on page 9, lines 9-11, page 10, lines 7-14, page 11, lines 5-9, page 12, lines 3-7, and page 13, lines 9-12. (References herein to the specification and drawings are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention to the referenced embodiments.)

Claim 1 was rejected, under 35 USC § 103(a), as being unpatentable over Sheiner (US 4,181,818) in view of Rhines (US 4,479,239). To the extent this rejection may be deemed applicable to new claims 5-8, the Applicants respectfully traverse as follows.

Claim 6 depends from base claim 5 and similarly recites the subject matter of allowable claim 2. Therefore, allowance of claim 6 and dependent claim 7 is deemed to be warranted.

Independent claim 5 recites much of the subject matter of allowable claim 2 and further recites that an attenuation circuit, as similarly recited in claim 2, has a variable resistance that determines a signal suppression amount applied to an input stage of an amplifier. This claimed subject matter provides an advantage of lowering the consumption of electricity by a hearing aid.

The Office Action acknowledges that Sheiner does not disclose an attenuation circuit (see Office Action, sentence bridging pages 2 and 3), but proposes that Rhines does (see page 3, second sentence). Although Rhines may disclose an attenuation circuit Q2 that attenuates a signal applied to the input of an amplifier IC-1, Rhines discloses that IC-2 generates a suppression signal that is applied to the base of transistor Q2 for regulating the attenuation of the input signal provided to amplifier IC-1 (see Rhines Fig. 3 and col. 4, line 61, through col. 5, line 7). Rhines' IC-2 is not a variable resistance; instead, IC-2 is an integrated circuit comparator (see col. 4, lines 23-27).

Although Rhines discloses a variable resistor R5, resistor R5 is used to dc-voltage bias the signal input of amplifier IC-1 for the purpose of setting the gain of amplifier IC-1 (see col. 3, lines 52-53). Amplifier IC-1 is an operational amplifier having a high input impedance that is not significantly affected by the resistance of resistor R5. Thus, variable resistor R5 does not determine a signal suppression amount applied to an input stage of an amplifier; instead, resistor R5 regulates the dc-voltage bias (i.e., the difference in dc-voltage potential applied to input terminals 2 and 3) applied to the input of amplifier IC-1.

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that the teachings of Sheiner and Rhines, considered individually or in combination, do not render obvious the subject matter defined by claim 5.

Therefore, allowance of claim 5 and all claims dependent therefrom is deemed to be warranted.

In view of the above, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If any issues remain which may best be resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

/James Edward Ledbetter/

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JEL/DWW/att

James E. Ledbetter
Registration No. 28,732

Attorney Docket No. 008638-06102
Dickinson Wright PLLC
1875 Eye Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006
Telephone: (202) 659-6966
Facsimile: (202) 659-1559